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SPIKENARD



SPIKENARD

A BOOK OF
DEVOTIONAL
LOVE-POEMS

BY

LAURENCE
HOUSMAN

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*L*OVE bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
 Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lacked anything.

“A guest,” I answered, “worthy to be here.”
 Love said, “You shall be he!”
“I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my Dear,
 I cannot look on Thee.”
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
“Who made the eyes but I?”

GEORGE HERBERT.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION	1
THE SWADDLING BANDS	5
GOD'S MOTHER	7
THE WORD MADE FLESH	8
THE CLOUD OF WITNESS	11
LOVE, THE TEMPTER	14
BEFORE CONFESSION	17
THE SOUL'S BONDAGE TO CHRIST	19
THE SOUL COMPLAINETH AGAINST THE BODY, AND IS ANSWERED	22
THE SOUL'S OFFERINGS	24
THE HOLY FACE	25
TO THE PENITENT THIEF ON CALVARY	28
THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM	31
THE GARDENER	35
THE AFTER-PASSION	37
A PRAYER FOR THE HEALING OF THE WOUNDS OF CHRIST	38
THE VOICE OF ONE, CRYING	41
REPAYMENT	43
THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE	44
TO ST. FRANCIS	46
CHRIST'S LETTER	47
DEDICATION	51
SPIKENARD	53

SPIKENARD.

THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION.

A DISPUTATION BETWEEN CHRIST
AND THE HUMAN FORM.

(For the Feast of the Nativity.)

COMEST Thou peaceably, O Lord?
“Yea, I am Peace!

Be not so fearful to afford

Thy Maker room! for I am the Reward

To which all generations of increase

Looking did never cease.

“Down from amid dark wings of storm

I set My Feet

To earth. Will not My earth grow warm

To feel her Maker take the form

He made, when now, Creation's purpose meet,

Man's body is to be God's Mercy-seat?”

Lord, I am foul : there is no whole
 Fair part in me
 Where Thou canst deign to be !
 This form is not Thy making, since it stole
 Fruit from the bitter Tree.
 “ Yet still thou hast the griefs to give in toll
 That I may test the sickness of man’s soul.”

O Lord, my work is without worth !
 I am afraid,
 Lest I should mar the blissful Birth.
 Quoth Christ, “ Ere seas had shores, or earth
 Foundations laid,
 My Cross was made !”

“ Naught canst thou do that was not willed
 By Love to be,
 To bring the Work to pass through Me.
 No knee
 Stiffens, or bends before My Sov’reignty,
 But from the world’s beginning hath fulfilled
 Its choice betwixt the valleyed and the hilled.
 For both, at one decree,
 My Blood was spilled.”

Yet canst Thou use these sin-stained hands ?
 “ These hands,” quoth Christ,
 “ Of them I make My need :

Since they sufficed to forge the bands
 Wherein I hunger, they shall sow the seed !
 And with bread daily they shall feed
 My Flesh till, bought and bound, It stands
 A Sacrifice to bleed.”

Lord, let this house be swept and garnished first !
 For fear lest sin
 Do there look in,
 Let me shut fast the windows : lest Thou thirst,
 Make some pure inner well of waters burst :
 For no sweet water can man’s delving win—
 Earth is so curst.
 Also bar up the door : Thou wilt do well
 To dwell, whilst with us, anchorite in Thy cell.

Christ said “ Let be : leave wide
 All ports to grief !
 Here when I knock I will not be denied
 The common lot of all that here abide ;
 Were I so blinded, I were blind in chief :
 How should I see to bring the blind relief ? ”

Wilt Thou so make Thy dwelling ? Then I fear
 Man, after this, shall dread to enter here :
 For all the inner courts will be so bright,
 He shall be dazzled with excess of light,
 And turn, and flee !

“ But from his birth I will array him right,
And lay the temple open for his sight,
And say to help him, as I bid him see :
‘ This is for thee ! ’ ”

THE SWADDLING BANDS.

O LOVE, when human sense first touched Thine eyes,
 Bidding them tell Thee naught, save through disguise

Of specious form, and close embodiment,
 Seemed it not sad that life such darkness lent,
 While to Thy new-born brain the wonder grew
 How earthly sight could so shut out the Heavenly view?

For Thou from the embrace of Mary's heart
 Must turn and see her play her earthly part :
 Can that poor robe, and this poor peasant face,
 Cover the highly favoured, full of Grace?

And can this weary elder Thou dost see
 The Heaven-taught Joseph be?

And in this cabin'd space
 Of stable rock
 Does not the whole world flock
 To worship at Thy knee?

Now, this first time, Thine Eyes must look on walls :

Where Thy Hands cannot reach
 Hands stretch and do beseech ;
 Where Thine Ear cannot hear, Thine earth for succour
 calls !

Oh, little Heart,
 Beat fast, and grow !
 The whole world's smart
 Through Thee, one day, must flow.
 Oh, childish Ears, attend,
 Being friend to all men's fears !
 Oh, childish Eyes,
 Would ye of man be wise,
 Ye must the channel be to all men's tears !

So wait, and learn Thy strict estate,
 Until to Thee this earth commits its fate !
 Each day a little knowledge brings :
 The shepherd's crook, the crown of kings,
 In time shall prove Thee great,
 When Hand and Head bear up their awful weight.
 Now round Thee, Holy Child,
 Life dawns in darkness mild :
 Out in the starried night a Herald sings
 Of Nature reconciled.
 Thou canst not see that Star, nor hear those pastoral
 wings :
 Yet first the shepherds come to gaze, and then the kings !

GOD'S MOTHER.

(The Annunciation of Our Lady.)

A GARDEN bower in bower
Grew waiting for God's hour :
Where no man ever trod,
This was the Gate of God.

The first bower was red—
Her lips which "welcome" said.
The second bower was blue—
Her eyes that let God through.

The third bower was white—
Her soul in God's sight.
Three bowers of love
Won Christ from Heaven above.

THE WORD MADE FLESH.

(Feast of Corpus Christi.)

O WORD of Life, and Fount of Paradisal speech !
 O living Coal of fire, from off God's altar !
 Now, lest they falter,
 Touch my lips, and teach
 My tongue to reach
 Some chaunting echo from the heavenly psalter ;
 So, with rebound,
 To glance the hopeful sound
 Of those sweet symphonies the Ghost-born seven,
 Though once Thou didst confound
 Man's towering hopes which could not reach to Heaven.

Yet, when the work a ruin, the hope still clung ;
 Yea, though the belfry, robbed of its clear tongue,
 Mocked by the winds of God a dead weight swung ;--
 Still of divided speech the wound stayed new,
 While still to earth slid the remembering dew
 Of Heaven who would not all forsake
 Hearts that at gaze thereon grew like to break.

And though by builders' flaw
 The Tower was reared in vain,
 Yet by the same compassionate law
 Which bids the mountains draw
 From Heaven's pure womb the rain ;
 So man's mute ruin, which discord did confound,
 Drew down the atoning Word that could make concord
 sound.

And out of Her, whose fresh,
 Clear soul, well tuned to the Heavenly Mind,
 Could in angelic tones a meaning find,
 The Word made Flesh,
 Quick from the kindling speech of Gabriel,
 From upmost Heaven came down with us to dwell.

O Virgin-cavern for the Winds of God, O Shrine
 Of Silence wherein spake the Voice Divine,
 Till, at Its summons, answering echoes sprang,
 And laughed to God and sang,
 While all impregnate with prophetic thrill
 Thy Word-attending Womb began to fill,—
 Thou sweet mute Mother, hail !
 In the expressive silence of whose breast,
 Discord did fail
 To drive God's Word from Its appointed rest !

Flesh from thy mothering flesh,
 Speech from thy speech,
 Shaping the world afresh
 Its Maker through thy mould His goal must reach.
 Word upon word,
 Wherein men's thoughts lie blurred,
 Taught by thy tongue He heard.
 Oh, strange compassionate strife
 Of Wisdom, when
 Thou to the Word of Life
 Must teach the word of men !

So, since He stooped to reach
 Through thee His mother-speech,
 And since thy gracious voice set open then
 His Ear on earth to hear His fellow men,
 Must not thy lips be those
 Which His compassionate Love can never wish to close ?
 They taught into His Ear
 God's Name, His Father dear ;
 They are the lips of all He most must wish to hear.

Therefore, Queen Mary, reach
 His Heart with human speech ;
 And with most heavenward sound His Love for us
 beseech !

THE CLOUD OF WITNESS.

(Feast of the Ascension.)

WHEN Christ His Being to man's body bowed,
 Veiling therein His glory as in cloud,
 Then all the Heavenly race,
 Deprivéd for a space
 Of Him the expression of His Father's Face,
 Saw darkly as in a glass
 The Godhead pass,
 Changed to a visage human in compare,
 Wearing no more the light of that celestial air.

So on the immortal sense,
 Which is to God's Presence
 As coloured rays from Light whence all light flows,
 Fell shadowings, and the word
 Of severance first was heard—
 “Love is gone hence,
 New night
 Withdraws Him from our sight!”
 Then forthwith rose
 In the angelic hearts new love to birth,
 Named Faith, in wonder looking down to earth.

So through the cloud which parted Him from them
 Brightness came down to us at Bethlehem :

On that fair night

When God, Who unto angels speaks by light,
 Out of the Word made Flesh for human sight.

O Cloud,

O Witness of the Father's Glory, bowed
 Unto our darkness, Brightness of our night,
 Open to us the blindness of our sight !

Unloose the shroud

Of mortal sense wherewith we are endowed ;
 Now Thou art melted in the eternal rays
 Of Light made perfect, by Celestial ways,
 Being parted in a glory from man's gaze !

How can we lack that grace, and not be grieved
 Till Thou returnest, Whom the cloud received
 From all Thy loving watchers that believed ?
 Was not full faith found then on Olivet,
 When faces of Thy friends watched skywards ? Yet
 All those dear eyes grew dim,
 They could not look on Him :
 Nor faith, nor love retain,
 Him that had cast aside all mortal stain.

Into the cloud
 He passed : He that had bowed
 Into the bosom of our night,
 Being Witness to us of the Father's Light ;—
 A Light for evermore
 Too fair for mortal sight !
 The Heaven-sent Sun that wrapped Himself in cloud
 And made thick darkness be His covering and His shroud,
 Had won His way back to the everlasting shore
 Where night shall be no more.

Over His Face
 The cloud of witness for a glory grows ;
 Out of man's sight He goes
 Back to the Heavenly place
 To wait the crowning coming of His race.

Then shall the cloud,
 With joyful thunderings loud,
 Grow parted ; and His Sign
 Be seen at length.
 And east and west, and south and north,
 His Word go forth :
 Yea, He shall shine
 Like as the sun in strength !

LOVE, THE TEMPTER.

(Season of Lent.)

O H, tempt not me ! I love too well this snare
Of silken cords.

Nay, Love, the flesh is fair ;

So tempt not me ! This earth affords

Too much delight ;

Withdraw Thee from my sight,

Lest my weak soul break free

And throw me back to Thee !

Thy Face is all too marred. Nay, Love, not I—

I did not that ! Doubtless Thou hadst to die :

Others did faint for Thee ; but I faint not.

Only a little while hath sorrow got

The better of me now ; for Thou art grieved,

Thinking I need Thee. Oh, Christ, lest I fall

Weeping between Thy Feet, and give Thee all :

Oh, Christ, lest love condemn me unreprieved

Into Thy bondage, be it not believed

That Thou hast need of *me* !

Dost Thou not know
 I never turned aside to mock Thy Woe?
 I had respect to Thy great love for men :
 Why wilt Thou, then,
 Question of each new lust—
 “Are these not ashes, and is this not dust?”
 Ah, Love, Thou hast not eyes
 To see how sweet it is!
 Each for himself be wise :
 Mock not my bliss!
 Ere Thou cam'st troubling, was I not content?
 Because I pity Thee, and would be glad
 To go mine own way, and not leave Thee sad,
 Is all my comfort spent?

Go Thine own ways, nor dream Thou needest me!
 Yet if, again, Thou on the bitter Tree
 Wert hanging now, with none to succour Thee
 Or run to quench Thy sudden cry of thirst,
 Would not I be the first—
 Ah, Love, the prize!—
 To lift one cloud of suffering from Thine Eyes?

 Oh, Christ, let be!
 Stretch not Thine ever-pleading Hands thus wide,
 Nor with imperious gesture touch Thy Side!
 Past is Thy Calvary. By the Life that died,
 Oh, tempt not me!

Nay, if Thou weepest, then must I weep too,
Sweet Tempter, Christ! Yet what can *I* undo,
 I, the undone, the undone,
 To comfort Thee, God's Son?
Oh, draw me near, and, for some lowest use,
 That I may be
 Lost and undone in Thee,
Me from mine own self loose!

BEFORE CONFESSION.

(Ash Wednesday.)

AS the foul flesh lays by the hindering robe,
 Letting the water probe
 And purge each stain,
 Till with that sweet medicinal receipt
 From face to feet
 The body is made sane ;
 So, from my shamefaced soul, do I aside
 All covering lay (who have so long denied
 Thy cleansing Power), to be purified.

Late though I come, at last
 The dress I cast
 Of my deceit, which hid
 Till late
 My soiled estate :
 All that I did, I did
 In secrecy.
 Lord, in my secret places cleanse Thou me !

As to the flesh laid bare, the water, led
 By its own laws of life, bids cleansing spread

With subtle press and intimate caress :
 And with compelling weight,
 Doth gravitate
 Round all which passively submits thereto,
 Leaving untouched no part ;
 So to my heart,
 Stripped of itself, Thine utmost healing do !
 So from its falsehood wash it with Thy truth :
 And from lust-loving lave it in Thy ruth :
 And with pure Waters pitiful, whose art
 The virtue bears of an inborn embrace,
 Wash Thou the soil of shame from off my face !

Against all outward secrecy I pray,
 Let all such secrecy be put away !
 Since Thou in all my secrets seest me,
 Thine, not the world's, let all my secrets be !
 So, in Thy secret Ear when they are named,
 I shall be naked but yet not ashamed :
 And my great gain be this dear privacy—
 When I shut out the world, to shut in Thee !

THE SOUL'S BONDAGE TO CHRIST.

(Holy Cross Day.)

O LIVING, dying Love, whom death set free,
 Not if I would
 Can I now lose the good
 Thou gavest me :
 Never unburdened may my conscience be
 To find—Thy Grace withstood—
 Her chambers swept of Thee !

Thou, in my blood, dost bleed :
 Yea, even from the seed
 Of sin, Love's cause to plead,
 Thy Face
 Finds space
 To spring reproach from each rank, bitter weed !

Dear mystery of Love, which so decreed
 By strong design to win
 Sure entrance in
 To man's most secret need,
 Thou for our piteous sakes
 Becamest Sin !

So when temptation wakes,
 Thy Cross's form it takes,
 Making each sinner see
 His sin mount up to be
 Thy Calvary !

Would I might sin, sweet Christ, and cease to know
 That we are kin and share each other's woe !
 Would I might be so low,
 So low,
 That I might let Thee go,
 And force Thee to forsake
 The heart that made Thine ache !
 Thou sayest " No !
 For this cause slain,
 In this My conquest lies—
 Never canst thou again
 So cover up thine eyes !

" Stained with thy stain,
 My Head shall bow unto the self-same pain,
 And thou shalt know
 In thine own flesh the likeness of My Woe ! "

Love, Joy, and Gentleness,
 To Thee I press !
 Meekness, long-suffering,
 To Thee I cling !

Peace, Temperance, and Faith,
Against Whom is no law,
Being the one All-in-all
To which all flesh must draw,
So wounded in the house of all Thy friends,
Teach them by Wounds, to make Thee fair amends,
Till all self-wounding ends !

THE SOUL COMPLAINETH AGAINST THE
BODY, AND IS ANSWERED.

(Feast of the Circumcision.)

UNDER so many shadows I am laid,
Amid these builded walls that flesh hath made
Fivefold about me—every sense a shade,
How shall I see Light in a light so dim ?
Windows away from God are walls from Him !
Of walls, then, am I made.

These things I do,
These other things I see,
Shape not for me
Aught that I dare name true.
Rather they seem to be
Hard riddles that, with sloth and pain,
I must again
Undo.

How shall mine eyes
Things, that they love exceedingly, despise ?
How shall my flesh defeat
All things my heart names sweet ?

Nay, how shall I be wise
 When all my brain, led by light folly, lies ;
 Nor can escape deceit,
 Save by disguise ;
 Itself at once the cheated, and the cheat !

O dust, have faith according to the term
 Of this life's lease ! Ere the corrupting worm
 Have power to destroy the dust thou art !
 Ere the dark rust
 Of death can clog the engine of thy heart !
 Great is thine honour, though thou walk in night ;
 For fringes of thy darkness feel the Light
 Which was ordained to be
 When God, the Just,
 From shadow shaping thee,
 Put trust
 In dust.

THE SOUL'S OFFERINGS.

(Holy Thursday.)

O CHRIST, first let me know
 How sweet life's best can be :
 Then call me to forego
 Its sweets for Thee !

First, passion let me taste
 Which all men praise or pray :
 Then bid me cast in haste
 The prize away.

From death first make me shrink
 In bodily strong dread :
 Then, then the cup to drink,
 And then the bed !

THE HOLY FACE.

(Good Friday.)

O SEA of sorrow, suffering made divine !
 O Deep, which dost contain,
 To which doth flow
 More than was ever wrought or dreamed of woe
 By mortal brain !
 O sacred Main,
 Where mine
 And all men's pain
 Reflected shine !
 Thou Holy Face,
 Image and Impress of the Father's Grace,
 Where visibly doth move
 The Holy Spirit spreading Wings of Love ;
 Compassionate and fair
 Attend my prayer !

O Healing Face, to all mankind most kind,
 Teach me to find
 Thee, lest I wander blind !

For as the river seeks the sea,
 And as its rest the rain,
 So seeks my face for Thee,
 So pleads my prayer the pain
 That pleads through Thee :
 " Behold, and see,
 Is there a sorrow that has no part in me ? "

So in Thy pain I seek
 The pains that hold me weak :
 Oh, where
 In that dear Visage marred beyond compare
 Is set my care ?

Each languid Lid
 Is vigil worn because of things I did :
 Is robbed of sleep
 And power
 Because I would not keep
 The watch one little hour !
 His Brow is marred and bound
 With thorns because I found
 Pure thoughts too hard to prize !
 Because mine eyes
 Feasted on vain desire,
 And put their trust
 Where a disguise of fire
 Made covering for lust :

Therefore in Him
 Sight weigheth faint and dim !
 Because my lips found fruit
 Too pleasant to the taste,
 Wherefrom came waste
 Wherein all bitterness hath root,
 Therefore His Mouth
 Is parched and full of drouth,
 While He in patience doth assuage my haste !

O Sea of Griefs divine,
 Deep Wave of care,
 Ocean of Love, where all God's stars do shine ;
 Over whose Face perpetually doth thrill
 The Quickening Spirit of the Godhead's Will,
 Moving until the Water be made Wine !
 To Thee all prayer
 Turns still, and finds most fair
 This Face of Love, thus marred beyond compare :
 For over It are wrought
 All shades of human thought :
 Grief, and strong lamentation, and sharp pain,
 In strength cast down and raised, in loss made gain,
 In weakness borne, in weariness out-worn,
 In death, defeat and scorn.
 Oh, Face most fair,
 Spring-Tide of God, flood all my griefs in Thee
 Till, as the water covereth the sea,
 Thou coverest me !

TO THE PENITENT THIEF ON
CALVARY.

WHEN shame and darkness covered Him and thee,
What didst thou see,
O thou great penitent of Calvary,
That thou couldst beg this boon as thy reward
For suffering?—"When Thou comest to Thy King-
dom, Lord,
Remember me!"

In that most darkest hour,
Of hatred born,
When Satan's power
Showed Love held up to scorn,
What way
To thee came strength to pray?—
"Lord, when Thy Kingdom cometh unto Thee,
Remember me!"

Above thy head the darkness did not rend
To kindle thought;
No healing sign was wrought
About that death-place of earth's dying Friend,
To tell beholders, "This is not the end!"

Thou through the veil
 Didst gaze
 Into the centre of all Time's amaze :
 Thy tongue ere Easter greetings cried " All Hail ! "

O tongue, whereon such fires of faith were found,
 O most triumphant sound
 Of prophecy that ever fell from man
 Since Time began,
 That, with its dying breath,
 Hailed Life in death,
 And named the Victor in the Victim bound !

Therefore to thee,
 Strong Saint, I make my plea,
 Pray lest I tempt my fate !
 Lest with a soul too dead,
 Drawn down to my last bed,
 I have not eyes to see
 Beyond mine own gross darkness covering me !
 Too late, too late,
 For my sad soul's defence
 Were death-bed penitence !
 Only for thy clear soul that hour sufficed
 To pierce the rift, and bid the darkness lift ;
 All we like thieves have stolen our days from Christ,
 And think with late avowal that guilt to shift,
 But at the last can bring no recompensing gift.

O Light in a dark place,
Show not too fair a light !
Lest thy strong suppliant face
Draw weaker souls to night ;
And they, in their dark need,
Have not such light to plead.

Therefore my prayer to thee,
Pray thou for me,
Lest at the last
Self-knowledge hold me fast
To sins I see !
So, while I draw strong breath,
Pray lest I, brought to death,
Die, and fall short of thee !

THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM.

(Easter Eve.)

WHEN Thou art come into Thy Kingdom, Lord,
Remember me !

Strong Word of Life, holding the two-edged sword,
What is it bars Thy Kingdom back from Thee ?

Wherefore Thy Reign on earth may I not see ?

Here, like an Olivet, Thy Holy Board

In wedding raiment waits,

And round Thy gates

Kneels Faith and prays " Let will on earth accord

With Heaven's, O Bread of Angels, Blood outpoured !

" Dost thou believe, O child of grief ? "

O Lord, I would believe ; help Thou mine unbelief !

" Dost thou believe that Jesus, Whom

God covered in the Virgin's womb,

Took on Himself the form of fallen man,

And, sinless, bore the sinner's ban,

And, fellow to the peace within,

Felt pain—the punishment of sin—

And, veiling from Himself the Light,
Of man's five senses bore the night ?

Dost thou believe a blessed Maiden,

By sin unleavenéd,

Once went God-laden ?—

And canst thou not receive

That through this hallowed and unleavened Bread
God's Heaven can be spread ?

“Dost thou believe the Lord of Life, Whose Breath
Gives being, could bow and enter Death,

And to that flesh, which covered Him as cloud,

Take on mortality to be His shroud ;

And that the tomb,

At night's tremendous nod,

Quaked not in giving room

To Him the Eternal God ?—

And canst thou not believe Him when He saith

That, by the words which wore His living Breath,

He, to this Bread

Coming, can make His bed ?

What ! wouldst thou have the hands of hate more strong

To do Him wrong,

Than praying hands, in innocence washed white,

To do Him right ?

For if the grave embowered the Lord of Light,

Holding Him slain and dumb,

May not His Altar feel His living Footsteps come ?

“Dost thou believe

That He can break

The fountains of the Deep, and cleave

The clouds of Heaven, and bid the mountains shake,
And the dark furrow-field of sleep to heave

Its dead to light?—And canst thou not believe,

Because the attendant signs are all too dumb,
That, by a mystery, this Bread may be His Kingdom
come?

“Dost thou believe Christ’s Reign will ever come?—

Then what is it which bars Christ’s Reign from thee?
Thou seest in thine own self the sum

Of hard denial! Whence look and see
Here on My Altar what My Reign might be!

This daily bread

Wherewith man’s flesh is fed—

’Tis by self-will he eats, and finds not Me.

Were two or three

Together, in their midst there would I be!

“My earth

Lies in the womb of Time, a struggling birth.

Knoweth the child unborn whence comes the strength

Which bids his life enlarge,

Until at length

The womb in travail renders up her charge?

He knoweth not what walls,

Nor what maternal way
 Of patient waiting keep him back from day :
 He knoweth not the large and liberal air
 That rounds his dark abode :
 Save through his mother's prayer
 He hath not looked on God.

“Dost thou believe at last, O child of grief?”
 Lord I believe ; help Thou mine unbelief!

O Thou, our Father ere we came
 To being, hallowed be Thy Name !
 Thy Kingdom come : Thy Will be done,
 Till Heaven and earth be joined as one !
 For when Thy Will is wrought on earth
 The second Christ will come to birth ;
 And this sad earth, which was His tomb,
 Shall quicken as the Virgin's womb :
 The rocks shall rend to give Him way
 And bring the second Easter Day.
 And east, and west, and south, and north,
 † His Sign, through all the world gone forth,
 Shall rest upon both land and sea,
 Making earth shine like Calvary.
 And He shall reach out Healing Hands
 To gather nations and all lands,
 And open wide, to welcome them,
 The twelve gates of Jerusalem !

THE GARDENER.

(The Feast of St. Mary Magdalene.)

WHEN fell the uprisen Voice in Mary's ear,
 She thought that it had been the gardener,
 Tending the early flowers, who spake to her.

Surely the listening heart had told her right !
 For He, indeed, to call lost flowers to light
 Had worked with our first father all the night.

His Eyes, which met the newly risen day,
 Had gazed on fields of spiritual clay,
 Where all the imprisoned seed of Adam lay.

From His own Heart which broke He watered them :
 From thorns which choke He chose His diadem;
 Till cheered and freed
 The patriarchal seed
 Broke into blossom at His raiment's hem,
 And round His Feet
 Shed savour sweet
 Through gardens by Jerusalem.

O Love, when in my day of doom
The stone of sense from off me rolls,
Then from this earth, a barren tomb,
Do Thou, the Gardener of souls,
Uproot and bear me in Thy Breast,
And plant me where it please Thee best !

THE AFTER-PASSION.

(All Souls' Day.)

FOUR Wounds Thy living Flesh did take,
 That out of them a stream might break,
 And with the living dew of Birth
 Wash the four corners of the Earth.

Even so, dear Love, ere man grew wise
 By fruit too goodly to the eyes,
 Four rivers ran from Paradise.

But when the Lord of Life had died,
 A deeper wound ran through His Side :
 That He might pour His Pain beneath,
 Into the prison-house of Death.

Oh, Mystery, past mortal ken !
 The Wound that pierced His Body then,
 He bore not for the world of men.

A PRAYER FOR THE HEALING OF THE WOUNDS OF CHRIST.

(For Advent.)

IS not the work done? Nay, for still the Scars
Are open; still Earth's Pain stands deified,
With Arms spread wide :
And still, like falling stars,
Its Blood-drops strike the doorposts, where abide
The watchers with the Bride,
To wait the final coming of their kin,
And hear the sound of kingdoms gathering in.

While Earth wears wounds, still must Christ's
Wounds remain,
Whom Love made Life, and of Whom Life made
Pain,
And of Whom Pain made Death.
No breath,
Without Him, sorrow draws; no feet
Wax weary, and no hands hard labour bear,
But He doth wear
The travail and the heat :

Also, for all things perishing, He saith,
 “*My* grief, *My* pain, *My* death.”

O kindred Constellation of bright stars,
 Ye shall not last for aye!
 Far off there dawns a comfortable day
 Of healing for those Scars :
 When, faint in glory, shall be wiped away
 Each planetary fire,
 Now, all the aching way the balm of Earth's desire!

For from the healéd nations there shall come
 The healing touch : the blind, the lamed, the dumb,
 With sight, and speed, and speech,
 And ardent reach
 Of yearning hands shall cover up from sight
 Those Imprints of a night
 For ever past. And all the Morians' lands
 Shall stretch out hands of healing to His Hands.
 While to His Feet
 The timid, sweet
 Four-footed ones of earth shall come and lay,
 Forever by, the sadness of their day :
 And, they being healed, healing spring from them.
 So for the Stem
 And Rod of Jesse, roots and trees and flowers,
 Touched with compassionate powers,

Shall cause the thorny Crown
 To blossom down
 Laurel and bay.

So lastly to His Side,
 Stricken when, from the Body that had died,
 Going down He saw sad souls being purified,
 Shall rise, out of the deeps no man
 Can sound or scan,
 The morning star of Heaven that once fell
 And fashioned Hell :—
 Now, star to star
 Mingling to melt where shadeless glories are.

O Earth, seek deep, and gather up thy soul,
 And come from high and low, and near and far,
 And make Christ whole !

THE VOICE OF ONE, CRYING.

(For Rogation.)

O STRENGTH, Whose Face in cloud
 Is wrapped, Whose Word is mute,
 Who patiently hath lapt in time Thy travelling Foot,
 Since silent Thou art King
 O'er all things high or bowed :—
 It is the weakest thing
 On Earth which cries so loud.

O Thou, by that high cry
 Which I with frailty barb,
 Pass not in silence by,
 Too Godlike in Thy garb !
 But tenderly to speech
 Bow down I do beseech ;
 And share, when Thou hast heard,
 My weakness with Thy Word !

Yea, speak, until Thou see
 Thy silence pass to me :
 Even as of old Thy hem strange virtue lent,
 Till what from Thee was spent

Went in to her who kneeled
And felt within her womb the bitter issue healed !

So speak, and Thou shalt see
How quiet I will be,
O Lord, and like to Thee !
So still, that after all,
Thou scarce shalt hear me call :
My voice within Thy Breast shall grow so small !

REPAYMENT.

THOU the Cross didst bear :
 What bear I ?

Thou the Thorn didst wear :
 What wear I ?

Thou to death didst dare :
 What dare I ?

Thou for me dost care :
 What care I !

 Who binds Thee,
 His own bonds unbinds.
 Who finds Thee,
 Plenteous mercy finds.
 Thou, though love that blinds,
 Ne'er blinds Thee,
 Seekest all men's minds.
 Who minds Thee ?

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE.

(Conception of the Virgin Mary.)

THINE earth, O Lord, is full of grief :
 Thy Heaven is full of love :
 Tell me what power it was in chief
 Which drew Thee from above ?

Where Love stands ever, all in all,
 No entrance is for grief :
 Say then how came to Thee the call
 That won the world's relief.

Since nothing mortal grief may move
 Wholly to cast out fear ;
 How came the marvel that pure Love
 Could ever enter here ?

Thou say'st, " This Law ordains relief
 All other laws above,
 That Earth cannot contain its grief,
 Nor Heaven contain its Love :

“So from the grief which has to mount,
The Love which has to run,
There springs and spills a Living Fount,
Till Earth and Heaven be one.”

TO ST. FRANCIS.

(For his license of a wine-shop kept by one of his Tertiaries.)

O FRANCIS, servant of the Living Vine,
 Since all that are His branches bear good fruit,
 So in my spirit let His Life find root,
 And let me serve Him, sending forth good wine !

For wine God gave, to make man's heart be glad ;
 Till came the foe who sowed the bitter tares,
 And gluttony to vaunt her evil wares :
 Wherefore to-day so many homes are sad.

O thou, His servant, with His patient signs
 Of suffering in thy feet, and side, and hands,
 Pray Him with power to purge His pleasant lands,
 And catch the foxes that have spoiled the vines !

CHRIST'S LETTER.

T

(Feast of the Invention of the Cross.)

THIS letter, Lord, was shaped for Thee,
 In it Thine outstretched Arms I see :
 Thy Life, that all things did aTone,
 Made it Thy FooTsTool and Thy Throne.
 It waited for Thee here in earTh,
 And ran to worship at Thy BirTh ;
 Gave Thee a sTable for Thy hall,
 And for a cradle used a sTall ;
 'Twas in the brightness of the sTar,
 A light wherever Gentiles are,
 That led the wise men from afar.

MarTyrs for Thee, and well content,
 It marked each Holy InnocenT ;
 And in the close and secret night
 To EgypT companied Thy FlighT.
 In Thy Twelfth year with Thee 'twas found,
 In Temple, with the Doçtors round ;
 Then, to prepare Thee for Thy DeaTh,
 Went home with Thee to NazareTh :
 Next at Thy BapTism to be,

Bearing the SpiriT company,
That dove-like did descend on Thee.

While through the deserT Thou didst wend,
Being TempTed, it was twice Thy friend ;
And when Thou putttest sin to shame,
It thrust its spear through SaTan's name—
A living wound, that all may see,
The ŠerpenT's end being wrought by Thee,
Thou shalt fulfil ETerniT^y.

Thus was it with Thee in Thy FasT,
And, when the vigil was well passed,
With Thine aposTles first and least
Went with Thee to the marriage-feasT.
With Thee it stood upon the mounT
Where PieTy opened clear account ;
And, with pure blessings for the good,
Stretched arms in each BeaTiTude :
And on another mounT, where shone
Thy Face too fair to look upon
At Thy Transfiguration.

It witnessed Thee, the mystic HosT,
First at Thy FeasT take up Thy post,
When to the Twelve Thou didst present
Thy Body in the SacramenT.
'Twas with Thee when Thou wast beTrayed,
And in Thy Trial it wiTness made.
'Twas in the sTrokes, the 'Thongs that bound,
The spiTTing, and the Thorns that crowned :

In its own shape it reared for Thee,
 VicTim and PriesT, the bitter Tree :
 And, double witness of Thy ThirsT,
 Stood last in letting Thee be FirsT :
 Yea, that she too might bear a part,
 Set sword in Thine own MoTher's hearT.
 'Twas with Thee in Thy latest BreaTh ;
 And, when Thy head was bowed to DeaTh,
 Stayed faithful to the uttermost.
 Till Thou hadst yielded up the ghosT,
 Then at Thy Tomb it watched anon,
 Until the EasTer morning shone
 Upon Thy ResurrecTion.

'Twas there when, for the last time met,
 Rested Thy FeeT on OliveT ;
 But, left a mark for men below,
 In Thine Ascension did not go.
 A sign of Thee, whom sighT had lost,
 It witness gave at PenTecosT :
 Of Life that DeaTh might not divide
 With cloven Tongues it prophesied.

Therefore, dear Lord, this letter stands
 A symbol of Thine ouTsTreTched Hands,
 To earthly joining Heavenly wiT ;
 Nor are they SainTs who have not it !
 That Heaven and Earth more bound may be,
 Twice does it sign the TriniTy ;

And for close shelter comes to rest
Midmost upon the FaTher's BreasT.
Yet still, as if naught else sufficed,
Stands last in the dear Name of ChrisT
When Thy dread alTar draws my feet,
I hear it bid me " Take and eaT " :
And first and last it guards my TrusT,
That Thou wilt raise me from the dusT.

DEDICATION.

WHEN I have ended, then I see
 How far my words come short of Thee :
 Speech heavenly cannot live on earthly lips,
 Pure thoughts borne down to language bear eclipse.

Ah, Christ, what harmony will that be then,
 When, in Thy likeness, all the thoughts of men
 Grow satisfied, in silence serving Thee !
 For now 'tis difference that makes us be
 Each clamorous his own meaning to express :
 But then all minds will wear the marriage-dress,
 Moving in meet processional degree.

Oh, Christ, come quick, and from the body loose
 The long distraction of each present use !
 The hands that handle, and the lips that taste
 Not at Thy banquet, work but so much waste,
 And at sad lingering make heedless haste !

Some day, when love of self hath lost its lust
Of living in me, Thou wilt come, I trust,
And tread my heart to Paradisal dust :
Making me glad, ere last forgetting fall,
To know myself for naught, and Christ for all in all.

SPIKENARD.

*AS one who came with ointments sweet,
 Abettors to her fleshly guilt,
 And brake and poured them at Thy Feet,
 And worshipped Thee with spikenard spilt :
 So from a body full of blame,
 And tongue too deeply versed in shame,
 Do I pour speech upon Thy Name.
 O Thou, if tongue may yet beseech,
 Near to Thine awful Feet let reach
 This broken spikenard of my speech !*



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